



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Departments of Health and Public Instruction Work Together To Educate Schools About Influenza Prevention

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota departments of Health and Public Instruction are working together to remind schools, parents and students to take simple steps to help prevent the spread of influenza.

The new H1N1 influenza virus has continued to circulate throughout North Dakota and the United States since its discovery this spring. Schools will soon be opening, and the potential for student to student transmission of influenza will increase. Along with the new H1N1 virus, the other seasonal viruses are expected to circulate this fall and winter as well.

“With the threat of both seasonal flu and the new H1N1 flu this year, it’s important that schools, parents and students all learn how they can reduce the spread of the virus,” said Kirby Kruger, state epidemiologist with the North Dakota Department of Health. “The most effective steps are really easy and can be taught to kids of all ages.”

Parents and schools can help reduce the risk of students getting influenza by following these guidelines:

- Parents should get their children vaccinated against all circulating influenza as soon as vaccine is available. (This year more than one vaccine will be required to cover both seasonal and H1N1 influenza.)
- Children who are ill should stay home and not go to school or day care.
- Ill children should not return to school until 24 hours after fever subsides without the use of fever-reducing medications.

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- Practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
 - Wash hands frequently, especially after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
 - Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or the inside of the elbow.
 - Throw away used tissues immediately.
 - Avoid touching your face with your hands.
 - Avoid large crowds if possible.
 - Avoid close contact with ill people or people who appear ill.
- Schools can help reduce illness by:
 - Regularly cleaning surfaces, especially frequently touched surfaces.
 - Monitoring students and staff for illness and sending ill students and staff home.
 - Having a separate room for ill students and staff waiting to go home.
- Parents whose children are at increased risks for complications of flu should contact their health-care provider if their child gets sick.

People with influenza usually experience fever with a cough and/or a sore throat. They also may experience body aches, muscle and joint aches, headaches, chills and feeling tired. Some people have experienced vomiting and diarrhea with the new H1N1 virus.

Unless the new virus becomes more severe or the number of illnesses exceeds the limits for normal school functioning, the priority this season will be to keep schools open. The North Dakota Department of Health recently held a statewide meeting via videoconference and webcast with schools to update them about H1N1 planning and this new guidance.

“We are pleased to work proactively with the Department of Health and schools across North Dakota to provide critical information about prevention and detection of the H1N1 virus,” said Dr. Wayne Sanstead, state superintendent. “Clearly student health is paramount to academic success.”

Information about H1N1, including case information for North Dakota, can be found at www.ndflu.com. For more information, the media can contact Kirby Kruger at 701.328.2378.

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